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Carmina Ephemera

OR

Trivial Numbers

By *E. E. KELLETT*

Author of 'JETSAM,' 'THE PASSING OF SCYLD,' ETC.

Cambridge
MACMILLAN & BOWES
1903

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TO THE UNIVERSITY

Queen, that hast reigned six hundred years, and grown
In power, and ever growest, since thine own
Children have often scanned indulgently
The tribute of a faulty verse from me,
I, wearing but the garland of a day,
Cast at thy feet this flower that fades away.

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Carmina Ephemera

Heredity.

There isn't an ache that keeps me awake,
  Nor disease that incurably rages,
But my medical man declares it began
  In antediluvian ages.
Some progenitor first caught the virus accursed,
  And transmitted it on to his offspring;
And *that* is the cause of this pain in my jaws,
  And thence does this torturing cough spring.

With philosophy (caught from an ancestor taught
  In the shade of the classical Stoa)
I'm enduring the gout, which I owe beyond doubt
  To the habits of Patriarch Noah.
With crafty design he planted the vine,
  And tasted the pleasures attendant,
While the consequent ill, with commendable skill,
  He bequeathed to his luckless descendant.

The case is the same with the faults that you blame,
  And each little moral obliquity:
The censure should fall for each and for all
  On a person who lived in antiquity.

I've been foolish at times—nay, even some crimes
I'm free to confess I've committed;
But ere you condemn, see my family stem,
And own I am much to be pitied.

In my intellect, too, there's a pestilent crew
Of progenitors frisking and fretting;
If they'd left me alone what heaps I had known—
But *they* had a gift for forgetting!
By nature my mind was exactly designed
For poetical figures and fancies;
But my ancestors marred a most promising bard,
And made a sad mess of my chances!

For instance, this rough and inelegant stuff,
So sadly in need of correction,
Is due to the fact that my ancestors lacked
The laudable zeal for perfection.
If you censure my rhyme as scarcely sublime,
I answer, without any quibbling,
The faults that you see are not owing to me,
But to ancestors given to scribbling.

As far as depends on *myself*, my good friends,
Except that heredity hindered,
My poetical feats would excel those of Keats,
And Pindar be surely out-Pindared;
So whate'er you detect that is bright and select,
That's mine, and be sure to adore it;
But whatever's to blame from my ancestors came—
And *they* are responsible for it.

At a Science Lecture.

There is no pleasure sweeter, diviner or completer,
(Excuse this trying metre) or more beyond compare;
All other joys it passes, to sit in certain classes,
And gaze at bonny lasses with elegant back-hair.

With unexpressive fancies you cast your furtive glances
Upon it as it dances in varied light and shade;
With throbs my heart confesses the magic of her tresses;
The maiden little guesses the havoc she has made.

It passes all conjecture why dons should come and lecture,
And seemingly expect your attention to their stuff;
Stupidity amazing! you cannot heed their phrasing,
The while your eye is gazing upon a mass of fluff.

They blame us for permitting our thoughts to wander, flitting
From subjects more befitting high study's nobler things;
It beats their comprehension why thus our best attention
Should pass from Right Ascension to Wrong Imaginings.

They say in their vexation that *they* have no temptation
To such peregrination of thought beyond control:
How dull they must be truly, to suffer not unduly
A single thought unruly to stir their sluggish soul!

Dear girls, I put it to you—you do not mind it, do you?—
For not a man that knew you would say a thing to vex:
Just turn your countenances to men of younger fancies,
And leave the donnish glances to wander o'er your necks.

A Good Plucked One.

A German student, ploughed twelve successive times, at last challenged the examiner to a duel.

Dalk nit du me off Inkland,
  Und zay zat she iss free;
It gifs no freitum here in
  Ze Unifärsity.
You let yourselben pflauen
  By men off liddle wert,
And ask nit sadisfaction
  Mit bisdol yet mit schwert.

Gepflaut in ze—wie heisst es?
  Ze kleingeh—was you call?
I haf no hope on chustiss,
  No remedë ad all:
But zere—ach Gott in Himmel!
  I haf no kleinstë doubt:
I schreib du ze examiner,
  Und sofort call him out!

If I nit be a Schmugger
  In Laddin yet in Greek,
Nit—was you call—ein Büffler,
  In zat Areetmeteek,

Hass he denn right tzu pflau me?
Nein, by ze Sauerkraut!
I schreib tzu him a messach,
Und sofort call him out!

Ze dons are weit tzu stoltzy,
Tzu full of cheek und seit:
Zey neet a pair instructions
In noble Sittlichkeit:
It shall less Pflauings geben,
Outside ze smallest doubt,
If eferyman zat pflaut ist,
Shall call ze Pflauer out.

It would be ver mudge bedder,
Tzu gif zese high Decrees,
Nit vor a nutzless knowletch
Off ancient lanquitchees,
But vor a nobler scientz,
Und weit more nutzfull art,
Tzu spann ze liddle bisdol,
Or trust in tierce und qvart.

Und I, ass ze best Fechter,
Shall zerdainlë insist
Zey shtick me in ze Tripos
Ze erst man in ze List:
If women are abuff me,
Ja wohl! I bear my grief:
Bud men! I take my Tintë,
Und schreib my liddle brief.

Trips For India.

Mr. Oscar Browning declares that Cambridge compares unfavourably with Oxford in the Civil Service Competitions.

Half our great Colonial Statesmen hail from Oxford halls alone;
Hindostan is ruled by Greats men; Cambridge there is hardly known.
There, alas! our Oxford cousins solely rule from South to North;
Cambridge has her paltry dozens; Oxford sends her thousands forth.
Yes, we yield that great possession, that thrice glorious Hindostan,
To endure the suave oppression of the cultured Oxford man;
O'er each bit of *terra firma*, from Cashmere to Point de Galle,
From Bombay to Eastern Burmah, Oxford dominates it all.
What though Heber's spicy breezes softly blow on Ceylon's isle?
What though every prospect pleases, when the Oxford man is vile?

Just the Baboos' indignation, natural their fears and hates,
'Neath the sole administration of a person trained in Greats.
Maxims drawn from books Platonic he will airily apply
To the pestilence bubonic, staying not to reason why.
Points about Tanjore or Bally, and pagodas or rupees
He, most philosophically, settles with consummate ease.
Plato's wish is put in action; mere philosophers are kings;
Hence confusion and distraction, and a pretty state of things.
From Benares' holy river, from the Deccan's palmy plain,
Lo, they call us to deliver Ind from Oxford's galling chain:
Send us Cambridge men to rule us, men who tell us what is what;
Men who will not try to fool us with their Neo-Kantian rot;
Men who, when the price per pottle of the yam is half-a-crown,
Will not prove from Aristotle that the price is going down!

Lo, we answer their appealing; we will listen to their cries;
From Mysore to far Darjeeling they shall hear that we arise;

In the Service competition Cambridge men shall have
a chance,
Shatter Oxford's long tradition, share the great inherit-
ance!

And, as a preliminary to controlling Hindostan,
We the Classic Trip. will vary on a new and startling
plan.
Hitherto our course of study, and our system of
exam.,
Does not suit the Mahanuddy, though adapted for
the Cam:
So, as it is prejudicial to our chance in I. C. S.,
We will set some superficial, half-a-dozen, more or
less,
Questions on the Eleatic or the Academic sect—
Thus to sway the wide Carnatic or the Punjaub with
effect.
Acting on some wise suggestions, meant our chances
to increase,
We will add a dozen questions in the history of
Greece:
It is very freely stated, by some men who are not
fools,
That's how men are educated in the Oxford Final
Schools.
Part I. shall not give a title for the Bachelor's degree,
And—this point is truly vital—we will call Part II.
Part III.

A Fit of the Blues.

The papers at intervals thrill us
With stories apparently true,
How doctors have caught the bacillus
Of phthisis or fever or 'flu;
And whatever goes on in our planet,
Whatever we do in our terms,
It seems a bacillus began it—
It started with germs.

Perhaps there's a microbe poetic,
And verse is a form of disease,
To be cured by régimes dietetic,
By living on mutton and pease;
The doctors, by labours exhausting,
Have given us reason to hope
We may dodge the bacillus of Austin,
And catch that of Pope.

The veriest dull dilettante,
A Sternhold, or Tupper, or Close,
May grow to a Milton or Dante
By drinking a suitable dose;

And persons who aim at election
To Laureate honours and sack,
May contrive to secure by infection
The microbe they lack.

Now I above worldly position,
Or fellowships, honours, and pelf,
Have set my unaltered ambition
On winning a Blue for myself;
No colour can possibly match it,
O fairest of beautiful hues!
But tell me, can anyone catch it
By toadying Blues?

Does it pass to your blood by injection,
Like pox from the vituline veins,
Or can it be caught by infection,
Like death from our odorous drains?
Or, as with that strange impetigo,
To scrummagers horribly known,
Is its actual *fons et origo*
But contact alone?

Or can you annex a Blue Ribbon
By rowing from lunch until Hall?
Will you *thus* reproduce, like a Gibbon,
An Oxford Decline and a Fall?
If you stick to the tails of a Fernie,
Or other great cricketing Blue,
Will the virtue pervasively journey
From him unto you?

If the crux of this difficult question,
That furrows and wrinkles my brow,
Were but an affair of digestion,
I surely had solved it by now;
For I lunch and I breakfast for ever
A dozen of Blues in the week,
But I catch not, despite my endeavour,
The microbe I seek.

I have made it my regular mission
To study with diligent heed
The kind of surrounding condition
That favours the growth of the breed;
And I found, as I noted the place where
Bacilli most frequently lurk,
That the habits and lives of the race were
Repugnant to work.

Those places where people are grinding
And burning the two o'clock oil,
Bacilli are certainly finding
A highly unsuitable soil;
They find it, beyond dubitation,
Exceedingly hard to exist
In persons who aim at a station
High up in the list.

Now I, without trying compulsion,
Can offer a favouring sphere;
Like them, I've a steady revulsion
From labour that's over-severe;

And should the Bacillus Athletic
Be hovering over this spot,
It shall light on no unsympathetic
Aroma of swot.

Shop.

Strange it is that here at college,
  Howsoe'er the talk may fall,
On your special branch of knowledge
  You must never talk at all:
Be you classic, hide your Latin;
  Mathematic, talk not Trig.;
Good at science, don't put that in;
  Shut up shop, nor be a prig.

'Tis a law of Medes and Persians
  Not to speak of what you know;
Worse than all our worst aversions
  Is the man that bores us so;
If you wish to shine at table
  Talk of what you know the least;
Thus, by law irrevocable
  Will your glory be increased.

If with perfect skill mimetic
  Virgil's style you emulate;
If upon the final cretic
  All your views are up to date;

While on flutes and concertinas
You have notions sadly vague;
Talk of Glücks and Palestrinas,
Shunning classics like the plague.

If your longest spell at cricket
Was a single ball to face,
That, alas! dissolved your wicket
Into unrecorded space,
While on mood and term and figure
You have studied all that's known—
Talk the cricket slang with vigour;
Leave Sorites well alone.

For—I offer no suggestion
To explain the circumstance—
You may talk on any question
If you talk in ignorance;
Men will hearken with submission
To your conversation's flow,
If there's not the least suspicion
You are talking what you know.

Hence, by logical deduction,
Plain to any rapid glance,
Talk is not to give instruction,
But to show your ignorance:
And a man whose conversation
Ranges widely, does but show
The immense accumulation
Of the mass he doesn't know.

On the other hand, a Crichton
  Will be very slow to speak;
And his talking store will lighten
  Month by month and week by week;
Till, as grows his erudition,
  As his ignorance grows small,
Of his own unforced volition
  He will scarcely speak at all.

I too, though an ignoramus,
  Would be famed for scholarship;
As most cheaply to be famous,
  Set a watch upon my lip:
I, with studied ostentation,
  Save for bread or salt to call,
Never join the conversation,
  Scarcely ever speak at all.

'Tis True, 'Tis Pity.

'Tis a fancy that's very delusive,
And yet 'tis uncommonly rife,
That a 'Varsity course is conducive
To fit you for subsequent life.

The Governor thinks it is funny
If after a decade of Greek,
And spending an ocean of money,
You can't get a post in a week.

But now that my time's at its limit
That fancy less plausible seems,
Grim fact appears likely to dim it,
As wakefulness tarnishes dreams.

The Tripos's dangers surmounted,
I 've gained a respectable place;
By some I am even accounted
More lucky than most of my race.

I 'm better at Greek composition,
Most surely, than when I began;
And I am, if you want erudition,
An average 'Varsity man.

In spite of my progress in knowledge,
At sports I am passably fair;
I have rowed in the boat of my college,
And scored sixty-five against Clare.

At the Union my elegant phrases,
My attitudes easy and neat,
Have won the occasional praises
Of critics and "men in the street."

Nor have I unwisely neglected
The social advantages here;
A posse of friends I collected,
Including a 'blue' and a peer.

On hearing this true information,
Conveyed in this accurate rhyme,
You will vote, with a just approbation,
I have made the best use of my time.

And now that my four years are ended,
You 'll vow I am armed for all strife;
For the 'Varsity course is intended
To fit you for subsequent life.

And truly I 'm almost expecting
That offers will greet me in hosts;
And the problem will lie in selecting
From hundreds of suitable posts.

* * * * *

The offers apparently linger—
And still I am wanting a place;
Perhaps I must stir just a finger
To make men aware of my case.

Headmasters must surely be vying
For men of exactly my kind;
And the public is certainly crying
For scholars well-trained and refined.

What language and thoughts unbefitting
These people will use when they see
What a chance they have lost by omitting
To send a proposal to me!

For, because of this stupid omission,
Because they will not when they can,
They 'll have to fill up the position
With a vastly inferior man.

So, to save them these self-condemnations,
These useless reproaches and sighs,
They shall hear of my qualifications—
Id est, I will now advertise.

* * * * *

You 'll pity my woeful disaster,
You 'll sorrow, I 'm sure, when you hear
I 'm going as resident master,
With salary—eighty a year!

May-Time.

Sweet, the weather is calm and clear,
Doris, Doris!
Steer me down to the corner, dear,
Doris, Doris!
Do not steer me too wild and wide,
Hear the ripple the boat beside,
Sobbingly plashing as on we glide,
Doris, Doris!

Oh, if only it might be true,
Doris, Doris!
Down the river of life with you,
Doris, Doris!
Thus for ever my boat might glide,
I the sculler, and you the guide,
I the happy, and you the bride,
Doris, Doris!

Come with me to the A. D. C.,
Phoebe, Phoebe!
Watch Medea along with me,
Phoebe, Phoebe!

Hear the tale of the Fleece of Gold
Now in a modern fashion told,
Tale of childhood that ne'er grows old,
Phoebe, Phoebe!

Dear, attend while I whisper low,
Phoebe, Phoebe!
Something nobody else must know,
Phoebe, Phoebe!
Hear the secret I long to tell,
You, Medea, have charmed too well,
Chained my heart by a magic spell,
Phoebe, Phoebe!

Will you join in the mazy dance,
Margaret, Margaret?
Till the morning its sails advance,
Margaret, Margaret?
Shall we, sweeter than all that's sweet,
Chase the hours with our flying feet,
Wake the dawn with our measured beat,
Margaret, Margaret?

Thus, O thus, my queen, my pearl,
Margaret, Margaret!
Through life's giddier, longer whirl,
Margaret, Margaret!
Might but we together go,
Till the dancing is faint and slow,
And the lamps of our life burn low,
Margaret, Margaret!

Now I wake, and the dream is o'er,
Doris, Phoebe, and Margaret!
Things are not as they were before,
Doris, Phoebe, and Margaret!
Memories throng in my aching head,
Thoughts of what I have madly said,
Three sweet girls I have sworn to wed,
Doris, Phoebe, and Margaret!

When those vows to you all I swore,
Doris, Phoebe, and Margaret!
It was all but a metaphor,
Doris, Phoebe, and Margaret!
Grief it is, and a bitter pain,
Since 'twas metaphor, 'tis plain
Nevermore must we meet again,
Doris, Phoebe, and Margaret!

To Pyrrha.

(Horace, *Ode* I. 5.)

What slender youth, strong coffee sipping,
  The moistened towel round his brow,
Smit with the sacred love of Tripping,
  Deceitful Knowledge, courts thee now?
True daughter of thy mother Eve,
Well art thou practised to deceive.

Though now thy neat apparel pleases
  The youth unskilled to shun thy snare,
Though sweeter than Sabaean breezes
  The odours of thy perfumed hair,—
Yet ah! to ripe discretion grown,
Sad will he rue thy favours flown.

O hapless they whose childlike fancies
  Invest thee in a false array!
Nor dream how Time's prosaic chances
  Will strip thy borrowed gauds away!
Thou dost but love them for a while,
And lure them with a harlot smile.

I too, when youth her airy splendour
Before my dazzled gaze revealed,
Like them in innocent surrender
To thee my heart's devotion sealed;
But now, with Time's enlightened eyes,
I see thee, Knowledge, and despise.

Whate'er, deceived by thy caresses,
Of learning's store I claimed as mine,
Now, sunk in sweet forgetfulnesses,
I dedicate at Lethe's shrine:
For Knowledge, whom I courted so,
Has ploughed me in the Little-Go.

Ludus a non Ludendo.

Professor Haddon declares that all Games are Survivals of some Religious Ceremony.

"Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum."

Now-a-days, there's no denying, people *will* go poking, prying,
How-ing, what-ing, when-ing, why-ing, as to everything they see;
How was *this* originated? unto what is *that* related?
From what custom antiquated does this fashion come to be?

Everything is now attempted; tombs and fanes and lakes are emptied,
Even games are not exempted from their sacrilegious tricks;
In their vanity enormous they are hasty to inform us
Cricket first arose in Ormuz—on the evidence of bricks.

In the days of Esar-Haddon, says the great Professor Haddon
(You'll observe this rhyme's a bad 'un, just because it is exact),

Merodach, Bel, Nebo, Istar, were what poker, euchre, whist are;
Nay, all games that now exist are sprung from some religious act.

Even skating, rowing, racing, tennis, shooting, cycle-pacing,
These philosophers are tracing upwards through successive links,
Till, on principles Darwinian, they attain the strange opinion
That the functions Eleusinian were the germ of Tid-de-Winks.

Those who have been pleased to rummage in the archives of the scrummage,
Tell us it was formed by some mage in the court of Babylon;
Football was a sacred service, headed by a holy dervise,
And the 'back' who best can swerve is, somehow, worshipping the sun.

Or, perhaps, the game descended from some ceremony splendid,
When the priests, by throngs attended, marched to Ganges' holy flood,
And with an untutored notion of displaying great devotion,
Stirred by some divine emotion, rolled each other in the mud.

'Tis a slight corroboration that the athlete's invocation
Seems to be a free translation of those ancient heathen prayers;
It does not require a scholar to perceive that some who holler
When they feel a gentle collar, are a *kind* of worshippers.

If a man at tennis poaches, hear his partner's mild reproaches,
Or attend the rowing coach's exhortations on the Cam;
Only persons born litigious doubt there must be some religious
Origin for that prodigious frequency of one word "____"

No more Worlds to Conquer.

'Twas on a day—I need not say the when and how and where—
I met a man, all worn and wan, the image of despair;
His matted locks were flecked with gray, his steps of slowest pace,
And marks of premature decay were writ upon his face.

Much marvelled I this wight to spy, for clearly I descried,
Although he looked so old and crook'd, the signs of vanished pride;
Scarce thirty winters' snows had set their tokens on his head;
Why should he groan and moan and fret, and move as move the dead?

Sad and distraught, in gloomy thought, he tottered on his way;
He seemed like one whom sorrows stun, or ghostly fears affray;
With timid voice I greeted him, and asked him how he sped;
He turned on me an eyeball dim, but ne'er a word he said.

Again I spake—"Thy silence break, and tell me of thy woes;
Perchance thy grief may find relief in telling it—who knows?"
He stayed a while his step infirm, and spoke in gloomy tone,
"The locust and the cankerworm are mine, alas, alone!"

Much marvelled I at this reply, for surely it is rare,
To find among the strong and young this terrible despair;
"Thou art not in the yellow leaf; thy days may yet be long;
Why dost thou hug this fruitless grief, and shun the gladsome throng?

"To priest or sage, about thy age, is life but just begun;
The senator at fifty-four is but a rising sun;
The scholar just can use his tools, and starts with zeal sublime
To found another of the schools, or search the womb of Time.

"The bard's young ship its trial trip but timidly has made,
With feather-weight of borrowed freight, all tinsel and brocade;

But *he* hopes yet, in future days, before his light be spent,
To startle with Miltonic blaze the epic firmament.

"The man of trade not yet has made his Vanderbiltian pile,
But hopes to hold uncounted gold within a little while:
These men can see a substance yet in Hope's sublime inanities,
And why shouldst thou thy spirit fret with Vanity of Vanities?"

Vainly I spoke; my speeches woke no answer in his breast;
With blank despair he tore his hair, and seemed the more distrest.
"All these," he cried, "can hope that Fate has better things in store,
But I can never be as great as I have been before.

"When I was young, I too was stung with aspiration's stings;
I too could aim at future fame, with fond imaginings;
At school I formed a hopeful scheme, and long pursued it there,
To join the Team—ah, youthful dream of bliss beyond compare!

"At twenty-two I gained my Blue—I tasted glory *then!*
Delighted, proud, I drank the loud applause of lesser men;
At twenty-four I gained my all, the height of my desire;
I stood an INTERNATIONAL,—and there is nothing higher.

"Since then, alas, the years may pass, to others hope they bring,
But none to me, for I am he that *once* has been a King;
And I must weep and wail and plain, like him of Macedon,
For I have nothing left to gain beneath the blessed sun."

Timor Omnia Vincit.

As Jove, who sways the rolling world,
(So Homer plausibly has sung),
The white flag frequently unfurled
To stay the fire of Juno's tongue,
So by the same unaltered law,
The 'Blue,' whom lesser mortals dread,
Harbours himself an abject awe
Of her who makes his daily bed.

What though he tear a pack of cards,
Or rank of cricketers the chief,
Or lightly skim the Hundred Yards
In time (and knicks) absurdly brief;
What though he earn the thunderous cheer
By gaining an angelic 'try,'
If quakes his melting heart for fear
Before his Bedder's searching eye?

Vainly he forms the daring plan,
While measuring his 'minished tea,
To vindicate the rights of man,
And cow the unexpressive She:
For lo! when looms the portly frame
In aproned state before his eye,
His courage pales its fickle flame,
His gallant resolutions die.

The speech, rehearsed with zealous care,
To fragmentary stammers breaks;
The loftily sarcastic air
A shade of deprecation takes;
He soon assumes a lower tone
Before those supercilious eyes,
Begins to deem the crime his own,
And meekly to apologise.

Yet ah! despondent hero, learn
Thine is no unexampled case;
The Terror trembles in her turn,
And shudders at a grimmer face;
By Nature's compensating law
All frights have other things to fright'em;
Which in their turn indulge in awe,
And onwards thus *ad infinitum*.

Take to thyself no servile shame
That thou must own this killing fear;
The Gorgon's self shall feel the same
If but her destined Dread appear;
And She, whose direful presence lours
O'er thee and all thy timid house,
She owns the fear of direr powers,
And scampers trembling from a mouse!

A "How To" Poem.

I have given advice at a moderate price
  On every conceivable matter;
How to dress, how to paint, how to sigh or to faint,
  To coax and to lie and to flatter:
To ladies I've told how when growing more old
  They may seem to be growing more young;
And murderers know how to act *comme il faut*
  When they come in due course to be hung.

Stump orators learn the fine phrases that burn
  On the sanctified subject of freedom;
The Town Councillor buys my brochure, "How to rise
  To the glittering heights of M.P.-dom"—
How to cook, how to shave, how at Court to behave,
  How to live on ten thousand a year,
How to fiddle at concerts, or wager upon certs,
  My "Library" makes very clear:

How to write for the mags, how the knees of your bags
  May be saved from that horrible bulge,
How to travel abroad, how to cover a fraud,
  My cheap little volumes divulge;

How the Newnhamite crew may wear stockings of
blue,
And run like a new Atalanta;
And now I sit down my achievements to crown
With "How to write Verse for the Granta."

First acquire if you can all the knowledge of man
Possessed by the sweet Swan of Avon;
Be like Milton sublime, and in dexterous rhyme
Surpass the refrains of the "Raven":
Add the polish of Gray to your exquisite lay,
And Tennyson's neat little turns,
With a sprinkling of Clough, and if that's not enough—
A *soupçon* of Byron or Burns.

With talents like these (with water to please),
You may fancy success you are winning;
But I fear, my good sir, you will have to aver
They are only the merest beginning:
Your natural parts must be aided by arts,
Your talents by technical knowledge;
You *must* be *au fait* with affairs of the day,
And the latest canard of each college.

You'll murmur, I fear, when this counsel you hear,
So simple, so plain, and so candid,
That I ask you to do what 'tis certainly true
That never a woman or man did:
No mortal, however astoundingly clever,
United such gifts into one;
But sir, you are wrong—this identical song
Displays the impossible done.

L'Allegro.

The flying Term begins its round: I ponder half regretfully,
How swiftly run its hasting feet, and vanished all soon it is:
I take my brand-new Diary, and in its pages set fully
The use I mean to make of all my coming opportunities.

Here, on the threshold of the Term, I may as well start properly,
And set down Resolutions thus—a practice surely innocent:
First, not to play at cards at all, or if I do, to stop early,
And keep the stakes so very low as ne'er to lose or win a cent.

Second, to turn my thoughts, with all the strength of mind that I possess,
Away from football, rowing, golf, and every such inanity,
And fix them steadily upon the swiftly-nearing Triposes,
Convinced that long and painful toil alone befits humanity.

Third, every morn, whatever be the state of the thermometer,
In spite of fog and cold, and all the weakness of carnality,
At seven o'clock I mean to rise, exact by the chronometer,
To keep a chapel dressed and shaved—a type of punctuality.

If there is anywhere a purely artificial want, it is
The craving for the noxious weed, my lady-temptress nicotine:
I here record a changeless vow to regulate my quantities—
A thin cigar at half-past one, another, not too thick, at e'en.

Next, here I swear throughout this Term I shall through every day shun all
Those novels with a purpose, and romances psychological,
Those yellow-backs, whose well-worn plots, though washy and sensational,
Have oft allured me in the past from volumes pedagogical.

Each day I'll work from nine to one, with absolute rigidity,
From five to seven, and nine to ten, at physics or at botany,
Undaunted by the subject's thin and arid insipidity,
And finding interest and life in all its dry monotony.

In fact, this Term I mean in truth, renouncing all
frivolity,
To look on life with solemn eyes and show a prim
sobriety:
Frown on the men who celebrate our hero's deeds
with jollity,
And set a good example of plain diligence and
piety.

Il Penseroso.

The term is o'er; I contemplate with utterest bewilderment
The arid waste, so steppe-like or Transvaal-like or prairie-like,
Of misspent days, that I before, a Spanish castle-builder, meant
To bloom profuse with happy toil, luxuriant and fairy-like.

My cup is full, but that which seems to tend still more to fill it, is
(Enough to daunt a Vanderbilt with fears of coming debt, or a
Carnegie with a doubt if he can meet his liabilities)
"Dr to Mrs Hamilton for pipes, cigars, etcetera."

At twelve o'clock I oft have still been in the arms called Morpheus's;
Ten times the Dean has had to blame my sad unpunctuality;
He oft asserts, with truth, that he no other persons or few sees
That waste the precious hours with such amazing prodigality.

And just as I have failed, alas! to keep to one cigar a day,
So have I failed to leave alone those yellow-back atrocities;
I vowed to work (and broke my vow) like Newton or like Faraday,
At physics and at botany, my special animosities.

My other errors numberless, as theatres and card-parties,
My billiards and my ping-pong games, what need is there to mention all?
For though I own delinquency, I must maintain the hard part is,
Howe'er distressing the result, it never was intentional.

But ah! the blessed Vac is nigh, when I shall be distractionless,
Good compensation for the term, while slow the day revolves, to make;
And even though than my intent I should effect a fraction less,
I can at least, I hope, contrive a set of new resolves to make.

Local Colouring.

Once an author apprehending that a glory never ending
Might be gained by neatly blending Cambridge life with high romance,
Formed a lofty resolution, which he put in execution,
To describe this institution with much art and circumstance.

Well he knew his conversation should befit the rank and station
And the mental cultivation of the characters portrayed;
So he thought it necessary to procure a dictionary,
That he might his speeches vary with the learning there arrayed.

Dons, he knew, were men of learning—lamps in darksome places burning,
Men of most acute discerning, able both to think and speak;
Men whose talk, both light and graver, has the proper Attic savour,
That inimitable flavour only to be gained from Greek.

In their table conversation flies the aptly-turned quotation,
Soft Virgilian, barbed Horatian, paradox or epigram;

Subtly-bandied phrase Homeric, varied with a line of Herrick,
Flutters in the esoteric dove-cots of the storied Cam.

In the home of Gray and Bentley there must flourish evidently,
And be studied diligently, poetry and lore combined;
And our writer of romances weaves a web of airy fancies,
As to Cambridge elegances, in his uninstructed mind:

How the Master, wearing lightly loads of learning flashes nightly
Into exquisitely brightly polished gems of repartee;
How, in Common Rooms debating, Fellows for their coffee waiting
Pass remarks illuminating on some ethic mystery;

How their speeches, to repletion stuffed with choicest bits Lucretian,
Latin epigrams and Grecian, sparkle with serenest wit;
How the latest information on their branch of education,
With complete unostentation they contrive to blend with it!

Mark the cultured play commencing; note the dainty rapier-fencing;
Stimulating, not incensing; neat riposte and clever thrust!

See the art the art concealing; see the swordsman all but reeling,
Unexpected parry dealing, lay his rival in the dust!

Influenced by this conviction, our poor author on the diction
Of his epoch-marking fiction spares no labour of the lime;
Till each page is simply reeking with such wondrous clever speaking
That the jaded reader shrieking clamours for a breathing-time.

And, upon the book's appearing, what a noise of choral cheering
Swells and rises, almost nearing to the *Primum Mobile;*
"What a wealth of local colour!" cries the well-paid people-guller,
Readers dull and critics duller: "How he hits it to a *T*!"

Do not stare so sceptically; facts and theories will tally;
None is hero to his valet; Dons to *us* are stale and flat;
But the populace benighted guesses not the tomb-stone whited,
And the Dons are quite delighted men should think them just like that.

Shall we prick the fair ideal? shall we show the world
the real?
Let them hear our talk on Peall, or our empty football
shop?
Let them see our talk meander through a mead of
petty slander,
While our slang, like stale pomander, greases it upon
the top?

Leave the fiction unmolested; all of us are interested
In maintaining uncontested our unmerited repute:
Be it our eternal mission to ensure that no suspicion
Of the worth of erudition through the outer world
may shoot.

Yes, for her pretend affection; give her of your best
protection;
For the whole sublime erection of your Cambridge
rests thereon;
And the edifice we cherish would in sudden ruin
perish
Should the world obtain a fairish notion of the Real
Don.

Mendicancy.

Let us begin and send around the hat,
Sobbing together;
Cambridge, alas, is very nearly at
End of its tether.

Devonshire signs his ancient name below
This our petition;
'Tis most essential all the world should know
Of our condition.

Library 's asking for a wider space,
Suitabler fabric;
'Varsity, through vile poverty's embrace,
Can't afford a brick.

Sciences rising clamour to be taught—
We must aver then
'Varsity chest contains exactly naught—
Can't stand the burthen.

Pitt Press is eager for asssistance next;
Cries out each moment,
Money 's required for publishing a text
Plus a crabbed comment.

Salaries weekly, quarterly, and yearly
Half pull the place down.
Bankrupt we are, or bankrupt very nearly;
Must keep the waste down.

Yes, and all studies, fresher than at first,
Claim recognition;
Growing hydroptic with a money-thirst,
Ask an addition.

'Varsity, England's crown of perfectness,
May in a smash end,
Come to a dreadful contretemps, unless
Heaven the cash send!

So send the hat round; truly to succeed,
Dream not of failure;
Start getting money; he who takes the lead
Other men may lure.

We shall go adding daily one to one;
Don't let us doubt it.
Why should we not aim at a million
While we're about it?

And if you wonder what on earth to do
When you have got it,
I shall be equal to advising you
How to allot it.

Lots of Professors get the means to live
Without the earning:
Give me the means; I surely can contrive
Some show of learning.

I can do nothing as Professors do,
Or as your argon :
Make me Professor, with a tidy screw ;
There is a bargain.

That is my place, where all the vulgar knot
Of toil is loosened ;
Chemistry, Logic, I can teach the lot ;
Only the screw send !

Mediocribus Esse Beatis.

I started on writing a neat little ode
  On Honour men, Orators, Blues;
And my verse in its current how smoothly it flowed,
  Like the Cam on its way to the Ouse!
My Pegasus needed no prick from the goad,
  As it carried my delicate Muse.

My metaphors, too, as you needn't be told
  (After reading the previous two),
Were mingled and luminous, happy and bold,
  If not undeniably new;
My verse on the Orator rumbled and rolled,
  And daintily danced on the Blue.

But as I was getting to verse number three,
  An idea came full in my mind,
Why write on the people who, great as they be,
  Stand out from the rest of their kind?
Why celebrate Him of the famous degree,
  Or Him of Four Bluedoms combined?

These men are in need of no poets to sing
  The wonderful deeds they have done,

The skies of themselves with their triumphs will ring,
Nor wait till the earth has begun;
The trees at their feet will ungrudgingly fling
Their blossoms and crowns by the ton.

Now I am a man of inferior clay,
Without a distinction to boast,
And I like to believe there is something to say
For the common inferior host;
An army of millions unnoted are they,
While the famous are few at the most.

Then here's to the great unpre-eminent throng,
The Seconds, the Thirds, and the Ploughed!
The physical frames neither feeble nor strong,
And the minds with one talent endowed!
The commonplace bard sings a commonplace song
In praise of the commonplace crowd.

In singing, though scarce of De Reszkian class,
We manage to stick to the tune;
In the Tripos we float with the medium mass,
'Twixt Senior Wrangler and Spoon;
Our aquatics a casual scrutiny pass,
Though we never shall win the Colquhoun.

Our piety burns with a flickering flame,
But we manage to keep it alight;
Our character earns neither praises nor blame,
Neither black, nor remarkably white;
With our intellects also the case is the same,
Not dull, nor excessively bright.

Our ways are precisely the usual ways,
Our ability common ability;
We play just the pastime that everyone plays,
With average grace and facility;
The world we most certainly never amaze
By showing a great versatility.

And yet we have joys to the famous unknown,
That forbid us to envy the great;
Though little our life, we can call it our own,
We are masters in part of our fate;
Undazed by the glitter that beats on a throne,
Unburdened by cumbering State.

'Tis the aim of our life, so to guide our affairs
As to catch no inquisitive gaze,
To pass in a crowd uninsulted by stares,
Nor befouled by the Press and its praise;
And shun in despite of the craftiest snares
The Interview Man and his ways.

Peace.

"Platitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant."

The Age of Peace is drawing nigh; each weary bankrupt nation
Shall lay its smokeless powder by and take to arbitration;
The swords shall change to useful ploughs, the debts to paying shares;
The sailor leaves his rams and vows to follow bulls and bears;
The happy world, released from strife, from internecine jar,
Unites to wish a happy life to Nicholas the Czar.
Internal factions pall and cease; the times are growing riper
To smoke the calumet of peace, and calmly pay the piper;
Church and Dissent, to all men's joy, shall soon be set at one,
And find a peaceable employ for canon and great gun.
The tamest beast shuns not the wild; the cat shall spare the mouse;
And Balfour, like a little child, shall lead a placid House.

In Cambridge courts, and there alone, unhappiness appears,
For where, alas, shall then have flown our matchless volunteers!
These changes, and a thousand more, shall come upon our nation,
Since men have thought to give up war and take to arbitration.

And shall this Great Idea not, when started on its course,
Rain influence on this very spot with unresisted force?
Shall not our bitterest Cambridge schisms receive alleviation,
Like national antagonisms, from happy arbitration?
The days may come when H—y J. shall lie down by O. B.,
And P—t—y pass the time of day to stern Professor D.;
When V—r—l, meeker than a live or even than a dead lamb,
No more on classic points shall strive so viciously with H—d—m.
Boards of examiners shall sit in loving brotherhoods;
Plans A and B no more shall split our Senate into feuds;
At the same board, harmoniously, with faces wreathed in smiles,
With prophet's eagle eye I see sit D—v—s, A—m, G—l—s.

No more shall learned men discuss, in choicest Billingsgate.
In fly-sheets vile and venomous, the latest syndicate;
Nay, peace will reign so gloriously upon the shores of Cam,
That even on conjectures we shall spare the "perperam."

What visions of serene repose I see before me dancing!
When all our mimic wars shall close—O laziness entrancing!
When, by this best and notablest of peaceable devices,
The long-continued strife shall rest between the Cam and Isis!
Our boating Blues, to save a great expense of perspiration,
Shall then decide their common fate by means of arbitration.
Instead of hard and painful fuss, and foolish waste of strength,
Shall o'er the peaceful bowl discuss which boat shall gain a length;
And stroke, instead of bending to, with muscles all but rent,
Shall demonstrate the winning crew by quiet argument.
The Oxford Cricket Blue, in place of growing bluer still,
With fear of Jessop's mighty pace, that seldom fails to kill,

Shall, o'er a comfortable meal, in friendly conversation,
Decide the match by wise appeal to gentle arbitration.
Why spend the hours in kicking balls, ye Rugby Football Blues?
What bring ye back but scabs and galls, the fracture and the bruise?
What do you take such trouble for? Why are you all so keen?
To win a paltry triumph o'er another poor Fifteen?
Ah! though ye win, it seems to me, it takes a wit acute,
To set superiority above the least dispute:
A single victory provides no valid demonstration—
Why stay not by your own firesides, and trust to arbitration?

Nay, in the struggle of the Trip, that bloody murderous fray,
Where Dons, in wait for every slip, now slay, and slay and slay;
Where quarter is but seldom given, and where the victim's life
So oft is mercilessly riven by cruel victor's knife;
A combat to the utterance, to vanquish or to fall—
Is there not now at last a chance to end this endless brawl?
Can we not patch at least a truce, a short accommodation,
And our examiners induce to yield to arbitration?

Submit to make a compromise, to cut out conic sections,
And let the parts of speech comprise no more than interjections;
Allow the scansion of our lines a certain elasticity,
Or pardon in our rules of signs a noble eccentricity—
In fact, permit a little rust to settle on the plough,
And suffer everybody just to get through anyhow!
Ah! then the poet's dream were true; the battle-flags were furled,
Ah! then would dawn upon the view a mild and peaceful world!

But still, when all our battles cease, I fancy, don't you know?
The reign of universal peace would possibly be slow.

Hansom Fellows.

It is said that among London cabmen there are several Cambridge M.A.'s.

As to Tutors and to Coaches
  Times grow harder than before;
As the hungry wolf approaches
  Daily nearer to the door;
As in teaching for the Little-
  Go they find their little gone,
While the cost of garb and victual
  Marches unrelenting on:

As they see in armies thronging
  All the wants and woes of age,
And with vain and tearful longing
  Hanker for a living wage;
As Research and wide Extension
  Fail alike to furnish pence,
And the promised old-age pension
  Fades to generations hence;

As the laboured commentary
  Farthings pay instead of lacs,
And the screws inversely vary
  With the growing income-tax;

While the Bursar, howsoever
  Wisely he employs his charms,
Fails to coax, by best endeavour,
  Rent from much-enduring farms;

When the leaf is sere and yellow,
  And the antiquated Don,
Like another sad Othello,
  Finds his occupation gone;—
Then, the bankrupt and undone Don,
  Pawning "Rome by Mr Burn,"
Starts the streets of modern London
  (Quam celerrime) to learn;

Then he sells his Scott and Liddell,
  And in the "orchestral Strand"
Meekly plays a second fiddle
  In the Jebus' sacred band.*
Thus in humbler occupation
  Shall his days pursue their course,
And, by wondrous transmutation,
  Then the coach shall drive the horse.

* "The constable, with lifted hand,
Conducting the orchestral Strand."
—W. E. Henley.

Horace Washed Out.

"Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo."

The metres of Alcaeus I
  Have set to all my store of themes,
The triumphs of the Claudii,
  Wine, love, the gods, and falling beams.
Few poets with so dainty touch
Have on so little writ so much.

But now my threadbare stock of thought
  Refuses further strain to bear;
Wine, love, the gods are worn to naught,
  And falling trees begin to wear.
The metric lilt is in my brain—
Ideas, ah! I seek in vain.

But he who sent the fabled bee
  To murmur round my youthful dreams,
Will leave not long his devotee
  Unaided, unsupplied with themes;
A soft afflatus rustles by,
And whispers, "Man is born to die."

Inspiring thought, untouched as yet!
  Meet motive for two Odes at least!

Hence, ye profane, nor dare to fret
The Muses' most undoubted priest!
Before the inspiration 'scape,
I haste to put it into shape.

"Whether in gloom thy days be passed
Or best Falernian soothe thy throat,
For thee, my friend, remains at last
The exile's track and Charon's boat:
Thy wealth, amassed with sleepless care,
Becomes the plaything of the heir.

"Vain is to try with hecatombs
Pluto's unbending brow to change;
For king, for peasant, equal looms
The shadow where their souls shall range;
Alike for coward and for brave
Is set the irremeable wave."

Such thoughts, repeated o'er and o'er,
With subtle turns and varying phrase,
Will once be sung on Britain's shore,
And crown my brows with lasting bays:
Immortal as the brass shall be
My verses on Mortality.

These lines to Dellius I send,
Whom Death will not for ever spare;
And to another mortal friend,
With verbal changes here and there:
Change "that" to "which," and "so" to "thus,"
And send them on to Postumus.

Puer Ales.

A Schoolboy Dreams in Form.

Swiftly bliss from luckless mortals takes its unrelenting flight;
So the poets sing, and I incline to think that they are right.
Anyhow my own experience tells me joy is rather brief,
Momentary is the rapture, lasting is the pain and grief.
Ah, my soul in dreamland floated, in an atmosphere sublime,
Through the aether's magic spaces, balanced in a gap of time;
Round me were the clouds upraising high their battlemented towers,
And behind me trooped the baffled hurrying rosy-fingered hours.
'Neath my feet I saw the mountains covered with eternal snow,
And afar to west the setting sun's divine and ruddy glow;
Softly through the aether sliding I beheld the silent sea,

With her myriad dimples laughing joyous messages
to me.
Through my brain a thousand fancies in a sweet
confusion pressed,
And the soft and sighing zephyrs lapped me in their
gentle breast;
Tranced from all sensation, conscious only of my
dreaming soul,
Still I floated, floated to my infinitely distant goal;
Merlin-like, entangled in a charm of woven hand and
pace,
Dreamily I sail for ever through the enchanted realms
of space.
Slowly, slowly, vanish from me thought and feeling,
sense and sight,
All together sunk and swallowed in the formless
infinite.
Bliss supernal, thus in endless mazes to be lost for
aye,
In a strong intoxication rapt from earth to heaven
away!
Might I thus for ever commune with the astral
spheres—alack!
What is this that so unkindly drags my struggling
spirit back?
Irresistibly it draws me from my station in the sky—
"Jones," it says, "wake up!—and say the paradigms
of λέλυμαι."

The Epic of Ladies.

Inspired by Mr. Samuel Butler's theory that the Odyssey was written by a woman.

One question has for ages split
  The classical society;
But I have now decided it
  Beyond the least dubiety.
I've read the massive literature
  In all its vast totality,
And I have made assurance sure
  On Homer's personality.

My arguments are marked throughout
  By vigour and concinnity,
And I have set above all doubt
  Old Homer's femininity.
The marks of female style we meet
  In every single line of his,
Apparent in those dainty feet
  And harmonies divine of his.

Or rather, by this best and last
  Of all Homeric theories,
The time is now for ever past
  For saying *him* or *he* or *his;*

A fair and unexpressive She
  Composed those grand hexameters,
And talking of the Odyssey
  We call (beside the Cam) it *hers*.

Nay, if a man in Homer's lore
  Is reckoned very well up, he
Ascribes the cantos twenty-four,
  Undoubting, to Penelope;
And all those wondrous wanderings
  And perils of Ulysses's,
Turn out to be imaginings
  (Embroidered) of his missis's.

From woman you may tales expect
  Of monsters that exist in seas,
Amazing freaks of dialect,
  And other inconsistencies;
And long ere she had learned to ride
  Like Shorland or like Michael,
A harder wheel she knew to guide,
  The ancient Epic Cycle.

Thus, though so long in darkness sealed,
  Appears the whole reality;
The secret is at length revealed
  Of Homer's personality;
And all a scholar's eye has scanned
  In order to develop his
Ideas of a "later hand,"
  Is certainly Penelope's.

So, sir, since *Mrs* Homer wrote
  These tales of gods and goddesses,
Which we in common phrase denote
  As Iliads and Odysseys,
And *Mr* Homer's petty share
  Was merely to assist her, I
Expect you straightway to declare
  The authorship no mystery.

The Thoughts of the Plants.

. . . "The speaker said he saw no reason to doubt that plants thought."
—*British Association Report, 1901.*

We long have known that plants can crawl
And love and hate like humankind;
But now we learn that nearly all
Possess the rudiments of Mind.

The silence they have kept so well
From immemorial times of yore,
Is not for want of things to tell,
But simply proves they think the more.

Henceforth our terms of scorn shall be
To highest adulation turned,
A "block" a word of flattery,
And "wooden-head" by wranglers earned:

For hyssop small and cedar great,
The thistle and the common pink,
Like us are found to calculate,
To grind, to sap, to swot, to think.

And Wordsworth, when his muse confessed
"His teachers had been woods and trees,"
The plain and simple truth expressed,
And not in vain hyperboles.

Yet think not, Vegetable Realm,
These new-found powers in bark and leaf
Arouse in me, for oak and elm,
Aught but a sense of deepest grief.

For (*vide* Hamlet) naught is good
Or bad, but thinking makes it so;
And reason, even in the wood,
Must bring its full supply of woe.

Thy sorrows, pedagogic birch,
My sympathetic tears constrain,
Condemned to leave thy loved research,
And stimulate another's brain!

Sad wast thou, primrose, and forlorn,
In that disturbed and gloomy hour,
When thou from nobler thoughts wast torn
To flaunt thy charms, a Tory flower!

Methinks the weeping willow sighs,
The aspen shakes with hidden fears,
For thoughts about themselves that rise
Too subtle and too deep for tears.

And thou, nicotian weed divine,
How dost thou murmur at thy fate,
Compelled thy studies to resign
And aid mankind to vegetate!

Perhaps ye plants—I cannot know—
Discuss Foreknowledge, Fate, and Will,
And wonder where your spirits go
When all your troubled veins are still.

Yet, whatsoe'er your reasoning pangs,
Ye still are spared the utter woe—
Above your heads no shadow hangs
Of General or Little-Go!

Higher Criticism.

Suggested by a perusal of the Polychrome Bible.

It seems a certain verity that down to late posterity
These verses that I splutter must make a great sensation;
O'er each allusion topical with lenses microscopical
The critics of the future will pore with admiration.

With notes epexegetical, and glosses parenthetical,
These critics will encumber the margin of my page;
With metrical conspectuses, grammatical delectuses,
And dry-as-dust discussions upon my school and age.

Emendatorial scabies, and obelising rabies,
Will mark these learned persons in editing my verse;
And poor as my best diction is, my very firm conviction is
These editors will make it considerably worse.

Their lengthy prolegomena upon the strange phenomena
My verses may exhibit in Thirty ninety-eight,
Will certainly be curious—I shall in part be spurious,
And show in every stanza the signs of later date.

And it will be most humorous to see me shared by numerous
And inconsistent authors of varying styles and matters;
Enduring those ill-offices, which mangle half the Prophecies,
And turn the Book of Judges to parti-coloured tatters;

Or, like this new Leviticus, with apparatus criticus,
Mapped out to First Redactors, or twenty Priestly Codes;
Or, by the frantic mania of some perverted Cheyne, a
Mere cento of disjointed epistles, lays, and odes.

But O! the vast variety of colours that the piety
Of these devout admirers will lavish on my page!
All varied tints producible by cunning chemic crucible—
A perfect gallimaufry of polychromic rage!

The mineral, botanical, prismatic, and cyanical,
All colours of the spectrum, and every rainbow shade,
The simple and refrangible, with subtle change intangible,
These people in their frenzy will summon to their aid.

Thus, like those works of Moses's, which no one now supposes his,
I grow a vast mosaic of every hue and tint;

Displaying strange fertility in colour-mutability,
I tire my stoutest readers with my chameleon print.

Now, since there's no security that yonder dim futurity
Will suffer my existence as my own self at all,
It might, before forgetting me, amuse itself by letting me
Myself select the poet to whom my works should fall.

My verse is oft Chaucerian, Miltonic, and Shaksperian,
With now and then an echo of Browning's higher tone;
Although there's no denying it, true taste will always spy in it
A touch of something deeper, that is *my very own*:

Still, if these scholars critical by methods analytical
Will prove some other poet the author of my lays,
I shan't incline to mutiny if after proper scrutiny
They choose to give to Shakspere the undivided praise.

Atropos.

I, on this tiny planet strangely cast,
Must do my fixed two million miles a day,
Rushing along, ridiculously fast,
Hitched to the earth's predestinated way.

The earth, condemned to dance around the sun,
In abject and absurd subservience,
Eager to get her endless journey done,
Sweeps on, she knows not whither, why, nor whence.

The sun himself is similarly set
To circle round another star in space,
Which in its turn is tangled in a net
Of laws that regulate its path and pace.

Thus through the whole creation runs the law
That everything should wildly rush about,
And in its endless locomotion, draw
Something besides it cannot do without.

I never asked, nor do I greatly care
To make these rash excursions into space;
Far rather would I keep my easy chair,
And stick for ever to a single place.

Extended travels of this daring kind
  May suit a Nansen's more adventurous breast;
But my more humdrum, unambitious mind
  Prefers the less exciting joys of rest.

Perhaps the planets really like to pelt
  Furiously round, and then begin again;
But why should I, who ne'er the longing felt,
  Be dragged along unwilling in their train?

Embarras de Richesse.

A certain county has elected a millionaire as its captain.

I never shone in manly sport;
  Athletic skill is not my boast;
My pluck is of the moral sort,
  The wicket not my proper post;
But ah! the woes of being rich!
  With palpitating heart I dare
The terrors of the cricket-pitch—
  Because I am a millionaire.

Bad is it that the world demands
  Your safe pecuniary aid
For public parks and German bands,
  For useful fount or esplanade;
But now they send no more the hat,
  Your *purse* they condescend to spare;
Lockwood may bowl, but I must bat—
  Because I am a millionaire.

Oft at a match, with anguish mute,
  My interest in sport to show,
Have I kicked off with patent boot,
  Nor rubbed the agonising toe;

But then the town demanded not
Self-murder from its suffering Mayor;
Less happy is my present lot—
Because I am a millionaire.

Short were the woe, perhaps, if I
Could but receive *one* pitying ball;
But ah, as hope approaches nigh,
I hear my partner's crafty call:
The bowling to himself to keep,
This is his Jesuitic care;
My innings' worth he knows is cheap—
Because I am a millionaire.

At length the martyrdom is o'er;
The kindly bails asunder fly;
A single, aching, purple sore
Alone remains of what was I;
With joy the welcome chance I grasp
Exhausted Nature to repair;
Prone on the ground I lie and gasp—
"O *why* was I a millionaire?"

But ah! the breathing-time is short;
I yet have paid but half my price;
The British appetite for sport
Demands a further sacrifice:
As wicket-keep I take my stand,
And sadly for my fate prepare;
The fastest bowler in the land
Is opposite the millionaire!

Seek not the dreadful tale to hear,
The just-averted sudden death;
Ask not how perilously near
Was then the *final* loss of breath:
But if you would discover all
The sorrows of the millionaire—
Learn that I gathered in the ball,
But do not, do not ask me where!

Admirals All.

Tell me not how Hawke came sweeping
From the west upon the foe:
Tell me not how Drake is sleeping,
Sleeping somewhere down below:
They might stir a savage nation
With their swoopings and their drums;
Battle *now* is calculation,
War a thing of doing sums.

Blake and Rodney, Hood and Russell,
Full of unreflecting rage,
Admirals of grit and muscle,
Might inspire a thoughtless age:
Now a better time has risen,
Other sailors live with *us*,
Men who know not 'main' from 'mizzen,'
But who know the calculus.

Once our poor benighted nation,
When great Nelson fought and fell,
Entertained an expectation
Men would do their duty well:

Now, o'er sea and sound and channel,
How the message leaps and throbs,
"England hopes that every man 'll
Learn the art of pressing knobs!"

In these days of Krupps and Gatlings,
In our scientific strife,
Be not like dumb driven fatlings,
Do not risk your precious life:
Stay at home, and from your pillow
Kindle an electric spark;
Soon, upon a distant billow,
Other men will feed the shark.

By the swift advance of science,
Every implement of war,
Every latter-day appliance,
Grows more deadly than before:
As our Nelsons are instructed
In this new mechanic rule,
Bloody battles, thus conducted,
Kill at least a Spanish mule!

Men for naval fame have hankered,
Longed old Blake's renown to share;
But ambition's bud was cankered
By the dread of *mal-de-mer;*
Naval glory was denied them;
Theirs it was not doomed to be;
For a something lodged inside them
Never could endure the sea.

Now, since war is but a question
  Of a mathematic feat,
Men of shakiest digestion
  May be bold to join the fleet:
Captains of a modern vessel
  Smile at storms and *mal-de-mer:*
Merely touch a knob,—and nestle
  Snugly in their easy chair.

Horace on Heredity.

With occasional remarks by Orbilius.

(*Ode* IV. 4.)

Whene'er in men a trait I see
  Particularly well-defined,
I gather that their ancestry
  Possessed some feature of the kind:
[I never yet conceived you had
An ancestry so very bad.]

With instances of striking force
  Nature, in fact, is strangely full:
The foal has features of the horse,
  The steer is not unlike the bull:
The brave are of a gallant line,
[And asses of the asinine.]

If e'er a royal eagle lay
  An egg of magnitude unmatched,
So natural historians say,
  A sucking dove is rarely hatched:
It is, in fine, a doctrine sage
That there is much in parentage.

Precisely similarly I
  My own undoubted talents trace,
The dainty art to versify,
  The skill to point a commonplace,
To some far-off ancestral strain—
[Allow some credit to the cane.]

If I have thoughts that stir inside,
  If I have gained the public ear,
And wear the bays with lofty pride,
  The cause is singularly clear:—
[The cause is clear beyond a doubt;
The stick has brought the talent out.]

"Intermissa, Venus, diu."—Hor. *Odæ* iv. 1.

Though half a hundred years have sown
My thinning hair with flecks of gray,
I still can hit the true-love tone
As well as in my early day.

Obeying Cytherea's will
(*Id est*, the Emperor's desire)
I seize once more my Sapphic quill
And rouse the somewhat sluggish fire.

In youth I had a hundred flames
That stirred a languid warmth in me;
I scarce recall their fleeting names—
I fancy one was Lalage.

Barine was another's name—
Although I seem to recollect
The two in fact were but the same
Disjoined for metrical effect.

I mimicked, with consummate skill,
The burning tones of Sappho's lyre;
At fifty years I master still
The same old imitative fire.

A little pains will bring me back
My lyric grace and dainty touch;
And if the frenzied flame I lack,
My hottest youth had never much.

What means this flutter in my heart,
This throbbing in my aged veins?
'Tis love's indubitable dart,
Induced by dint of taking pains.

Spare, Venus, spare thy devotee,
Nor let me absolutely pine:
It is not as it was with me
When lovely Cinara was mine.

Who Cinara exactly was,
I cannot at this hour recall
With any certainty, because
I know not if she lived at all.

But Caesar bids me write an Ode,
And I in loyalty submit:
The Lesbian love-song is the mode,
And I have caught the trick of it.

When Caesar bids you fall in love,
You plainly recognise you must;
And I have writ the lines above
By order of the Great August.

Horace Again.

"Tristitiam et metus
Tradam in mare Creticum."

I was the first to wed the strains
Of Grecian Muse to Latin lyre;
And oft, I own, it takes some pains
To fashion them to my desire:
But I have found a simple plan
To make the toughest measure scan.

Here are some stubborn staring gaps;
I want a choriamb or so:
Bring out the latest ordnance maps,
And ah! how smooth the verses flow!
A tiny Adriatic isle
Evades the labour of the file.

There are some nicely-metric seas
Between the Negropont and Rhodes,
Precisely suitable to ease
The trammels of glyconic Odes:
The waves of Myrto and of Thrace
Are just contrived to fit the case.

My verse, secure from metric flaw,
  Calm on Icarian billows rides,
And keeps the Pherecratic law
  By steering o'er Carpathian tides:
I find the necessary sea
To suit the hardest quantity.

The Tuscan gulf, the Pontic pine,
  The bright and still-vexed Cyclades—
The most unmanageable line
  Will yield to subtle charms like these:
I cull the Archipelago
To smooth my Sapphics' harsher flow.

And though the jaded reader jib
  At this geography profuse,
The commentator's ready fib
  Provides the requisite excuse,
And proves by learned parallel
The 'special' must the 'vague' excel.

Thus to the kindly Cretan sea
  I cast my Archilochian care;
And, if you choose to ask of me
  My business in the said *galère*,
Hark in your ear to what I say,
—The thing is *metri gratia*.

'Integer Vitae.'

The pure in heart and free from sin,
  Whate'er calamities assail,
Requires no Moorish javelin,
  No poisoned shaft or shirt of mail—
Always, my friend, provided that
He sings unconscionably flat.

What though his ship through sandbanks ride,
  Or though in distant wastes he tread,
By lone Hydaspes' storied tide,
  Or where the Alps uplift their head,
Let him but try his *Do Re Mi*,
His fears incontinently flee.

For instance, in the Sabine wood,
  I met a wolf of savage mien;
Helpless and all unarmed I stood,
  With no protecting space between;
I deemed myself already dead—
I started singing, and he fled.

He was a portent such as yet
  Was reared not in Numidian plain,
Nor will the Daunian shepherd set
  An eye upon his like again;
And yet he owned, against his will,
My voice a greater portent still.

Place me, I pray, in future time,
To sing my lovely Lalage,
In some far-off and torrid clime,
From human habitation free,
Where I may try my vocal skill—
(Yes, Horace, we most surely will.)

Along that lone sequestered vale,
Far from the justly-maddened crowd,
My noisy tenor shall not fail
To chant my lady's praise aloud;
I'll sing her on Hydaspes' banks—
(For this relief, dear Horace, thanks.)

Horace to Date.

(*Ode* III. 4.)

Descend from your ethereal chair,
  Dear Mr Editor, and say
Whether you want a lyric air
  Or patriotic jig to-day.

My Muse, indifferently kind,
  Provides the same Pindaric rage,
Whatever you may be inclined
  To order for your noble page.

Already the poetic fire
  Informs my brain like generous wine,
For your unchanging terms of hire
  Are twopence-halfpenny per line.

It was for this in early youth
  I was not dropped by careless nurse,
Nor died in cutting my first tooth,
  Spared by the gods to maunder verse.

Measles and whooping-cough in vain
  Exerted their malignant strength;
For I was born to tune a strain
  Paid for according to its length.

It was for this the motor-car,
Too swiftly and too rashly sped,
Gave me, 'tis true, a nasty jar,
But killed the other man instead.

When on the orange-peel I trod,
And broke a limb, but saved my crown,
I knew some kind protecting god
Reserved me for a bard's renown.

'Tis now, I think, the time to vary
The subject I am writing on;
Boy, fetch the Classic Dictionary,
And look me up 'Porphyrion.'

That volume's lost—well, never mind;
The 'Danaids' will do as well:
As wives they proved themselves unkind,
And now they pay for it in hell.

Why those poor girls don't stop the leak,
And fit their tubs for carrying,
The cause I have postponed to seek,
Nor may we find out everything.

And now to make this poem end
In manner somewhat flat and tame—
One lady did her lord befriend;
—I cannot recollect her name.

Fortunate Puer.

The schoolboy's all-unconscious soul
  Drinks deep of joy, and knows it not;
A score of weary years must roll
  Before he owns his gladsome lot.
The sorrows of the Sybarite
  Alone dilute his happiness;
The crumpled rose-leaf in the night,
  By day a playing at distress.

At times, perhaps, he fails to see
  The love that prompts the wholesome cane,
Or finds in dull geometry
  A shadow of a far-off pain,
Or mars his cricketing delight
  By making an inglorious miss;
But sorrows so exceeding slight
  Are merely sops to Nemesis.

The pleasures of the palate he
  Appreciates with keener sense
Than those that in the days to be
  Shall come of fame or opulence;
Though by the turn of Fortune's wheel
  He rise to guide affairs of State,
Less thrilling joy he then shall feel
  Than now he finds in chocolate.

A twenty on the lowest pitch
An exquisite delight affords,
More multitudinously rich
Than hundreds at historic Lords:
And though a Ranjitsinhji's fame
Be his in yet undreamed-of years,
The zest he then shall know is tame
To that which comes of schoolmates' cheers.

The sudden high romantic glow
That darts along his youthful veins
When first he reads his *Ivanhoe*,
Or tales by Mr. Talbot Baines,
He will not feel with equal heat
When, in his pursy middle age,
He studies Dante's works complete,
Or Goethe's philosophic page.

The slow unearthing of the sense
That lurks in Virgil's line concealed,
Believe me, is a joy intense
That scholarship can never yield;
The subtlest of our Cambridge dons
That rapture ne'er again shall know,
When, with a sudden flash, the 'Pons'
Its hidden meaning seems to show.

Nor can I wish a deeper joy
To crown his swiftly waning years—
When man shall take the place of boy,
And stoic use represses tears;

When caviare fails to whet
  The dulled and jaded appetite,
And when the thinning locks from jet
  Insidious time has changed to white;

And faster than the thinning hair
  Illusions one by one depart—
Than that all-stealing time may spare
  Untouched, unspoilt, the schoolboy heart;
A schoolboy of a wider scope,
  Less stubborn in desire and will,
But youthful yet in faith and hope,
  So may you travel down the hill.

The Pains of Imagination.

(Hor., *Ode* III. 10.)

"There is a pleasure in poetic pain
Which none but poets know."—*The Task.*

'Tis morn; but in my cosy bed
I still will stay and rest awhile;
A song is running in my head;
Boy, bring the tablets and the style.

A glass of wine; and as the light
Falernian courses through my veins,
Let me begin with zest to write
Some passion-imitating strains.

(Though blankets wrap my shoulders round,
Yet in poetic metaphor)
See, Lyce, how I beat the ground
Without thy shut and ruthless door.

Hadst thou been born a Scythian maid,
Beside the frozen banks of Don,
Thou hadst not scorned my serenade.
(Boy, put another faggot on.)

Hark how the all-unpitying rain
  Pours on my unprotected skin,
The while I beg thee, all in vain,
  To ope the door and let me in.

(Observe the realistic tones
  Wherewith I play the lover's part.)
The north-winds freeze my aching bones,
  Less chilling than thy icy heart.

(The pleasant heats that gently steal
  Along my well-protected limbs,
Afford me just the aid to feel
  The warmth required for Sapphic hymns.)

O harder than the stubborn oak!
  O fiercer than the Moorish snake!
I shall not long maintain the joke,
  Nor every night remain awake:

I shall not *always* suppliant curse,
  Rain-beat and chill, the heedless wood;
(In fact, except in lyric verse,
  I see no reason why I should.)

Lentus in Umbra.

Come, let us seek a shady seat,
  Removed from the loquacious herd,
While the swinked bowler, in the heat,
  Perspiring seeks his hope deferred—
The wicket, from whose frowning pile
  Defiance still is proudly flung,
The maiden, proof to every wile,
  And deaf to his alluring tongue.

While the tired umpires vainly wait
  The chance of giving 'leg before,'
And the skilled bat, secure of fate,
  Piles up betimes his mountain score:
Here sit, and while the felon sphere
  Is blocked and quartered, pulled and drawn,
Permit the unathletic seer
  To moralise the cricket-lawn.

Not mine the bowler's hopes of hats,
  The stumper's apprehensive glee,
The chorus of magnificats
  That hails a laboured 'century';

Not mine the wildly-pulsing thrill
That naught in life besides can match,
When 'slip,' with scarce a stir of will,
Has held the meteoric catch.

Yet I my lot would hardly change
To share with Fry his lonely niche,
Or make the sailing scores that range
Above the ordinary pitch;
Nor would I anxiously secure
A future all too dull and tame,
The Nemesis of premature
And over-cheaply garnered fame.

As Cannae's victor lived to see
A Zama ruinously fought,
So he that makes a 'century'
Shall make in time the dreaded 'naught';
And I though seldom overcloyed
With superfluity of runs,
The compensating woe avoid,
The agony of making 'nones.'

And ah! to 'scape the morrow's pang,
The pang that naught can overweigh,
Of reading in the current slang
The deeds of sunlit yesterday—
To 'scape the jewels five words long,
The 'duck,' the 'tosh,' the 'buttered spoon,'
Nor grace the Surrey poet's song—
Is worth a thousand runs in June.

How through the cultured soul of Fry
Must thrill the literary throb,
On reading in the *Sporting Lie*
That he has cracked the dreaded 'blob':
I envy not the fame of Gunn,
Who scans the morning sheet, and finds
How at the last a "curly one
Has caught him in a pair of minds."

'Carpe Diem.'

One of Calverley's 'Gemini' *admonishes the other.*

"Singula de nobis anni praedantur euntes."

Can it be true a time is coming
When cakes no more shall yield delight,
When Age, with its embrace benumbing,
Shall chill the charm of appetite?
When chocolate no more shall kindle
The ashes of a dead desire,
And hunger's raging flame shall dwindle
To but the phantom of a fire?

Can it be true, or is it wholly
A fiction of the story-books,
That I shall scorn the rolly-polly,
And calmly shun the pastry-cooks?
That, though my purse with cash is swelling,
Buol shall spread his net in vain,
And I, no poverty compelling,
Shall all his sugared snares disdain?

Ah! shall I e'er, in base desertion,
Like faithless Jack renouncing Jill,
Conceive a horrible aversion
For gelatine and soft pastille?

Can I, however false and fickle
My other best affections seem,
E'er cease to love the pungent pickle,
Or cast aside the frozen cream?

But if the days now hidden from us
Possess in truth this direful power,
Yet thou and I can still, my Thomas,
Improve at least the present hour;
And, ere Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept our appetites away,
While still the youthful passion lingers,
Gather the roses while we may.

Redeem the time—for youth is hasting,
And soon we shall no more enjoy—
While yet the palate's power of tasting
Still tarries with the happy boy;
Ere *dies irae, dies illa*
A blight on your high pleasures cast,
Come, make a meal of iced vanilla—
Remember, it may be your last.

Accidental Immortality.

Shakspere in peace may rest his head
  Beside the silent sea,
Immortally secure, and dread
  No rivalry from me;
Small is the glory I have won,
And reaching not to Trumpington.

I seek no high poetic bays,
  Nor hope for deathless fame;
Nor boast for my pedestrian lays
  A lofty moral aim;
Enough if they be found to scan,
And please an ordinary man.

No Teuton of a land remote
  Or too pedantic age
Will illustrate with futile note
  My unpretending page,
Nor seek to gain a reputation
By some unlikely emendation.

The poet of a single day's
  Slight, circumscribed renown,

I earn, at best, a moment's praise,
  At worst, a fleeting frown;
My simple undistinguished lot—
Once to be read and then forgot.

I take it then as fate's decree,
  And fixed by will divine,
The poet's immortality
  Will nevermore be mine;
Nor will my modest annals stir
The zeal of a biographer.

But stay, nor form conclusions rash—
  For every recent find
Of Grecian or Egyptian trash
  Impresses on the mind
That really *nobody* can claim
Immunity from endless fame.

However bald the verse you write,
  How trivial e'er it be,
It may again be brought to light
  Ten thousand years A.D.;
For 'tis not only things of worth
That antiquarian spades unearth.

Some antiquary of an age
  Far distant from our own
Perhaps may find *this very page*
  Beneath a crumbling stone;
And scholars, with conjectures keen,
Will wrangle as to what I mean.

Like Horace thus, but by the aid
  Of jesting accident,
I may unconsciously have made
  A during monument;
And, like the actions of the just,
My verse may blossom in the dust.

EXPLICIT

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